

So protective

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primus

"Are we clear?"

"Crystal!"

He almost screamed his affirmation into his cell phone and cut the connection. Considering the situation, he was really calm for these kinds of condition his ex-wife put him in.

Well, to be honest, he was always like bitching and bantering but Steve has never seen his partner like this before. Detective Danny Williams has a loving side, like, always you could say, although he was stark sarcastically towards the former Navy SEAL. But he has never ever been so... furious. Danny tried his best to hide it but his anger escaped through every single word he had said to Rachel. He hasn't been loud, but his voice was growling, rough and scruff. The meaning of his words wasn't that intimidating. But his scowl was. And so was his voice. Steve couldn't help it but he got a shiver under the glare his partner gave him and so he immediately forced himself to focus on the road. As always, the SEAL was driving the silver Camaro. But he did his best not to maximize Danny's annoyance by chasing the car through the streets.

"Woah! Watch it!", Danny yelled, as Steve looked at his partner again and didn't pay attention to the traffic. They almost crashed into their man in front. Danny growled and Steve was expecting one of his famous rants. But Danny kept silent.

secundus

Steve wasn't used to Danny being *this* silent.

"Are you mad at me?", he eventually asked. Maybe the SEAL himself was the trouble maker – again, it would have been nothing new to them.

"No, I'm not."

Steve frowned.

"Am I driving too fast?"

"No."

"Am I driving too slow?"

"No."

"Did I offend you with my living existence?"

"No."

"Did I do anything else wrong to you?"

"No. Now would you please quit that shit and be quiet, thankyouverymuch."

Steve's frown only got deeper as he glared to his partner carefully, looked him over. His hands grabbed the wheel tighter.

"Did I get you shot and didn't notice?"

"Hell, no! I'm not mad at you, goddammit! Got that already!?"

Breathing hard, Danny bit his lower lip in frustration and folded his arms across his chest, finally looking out of the window. Steve sighed.

"You know, you CAN talk to me, I'm very good at listening, I won't judge, whatever it is what bothers you so much."

"Pull over."

"What?"

"I said: Pull over!"

Steve managed to find a parking lane and stopped the Camaro. Danny was about opening the door.

"What are you doing?", asked Steve, confused.

"Walking home."

"This is *your* car, you're aware of that, ain't ya?"

"I am."

"So why do you want to walk home by yourself?"

Danny stood, took a deep breath of fresh, Hawaiian air and then he just kicked the door shut, walking away silently.

"Hey! I'm not gonna be your car-sitter! Danny!", Steve shouted, after he had buckled off the car. "Are you listening? Daniel, I won't..."

The former Navy SEAL was very affected by this strange behaviour. He didn't know what was wrong with his partner whom he trusted with all his life and who always was his Backup. The dark haired man beat the roof of the Camaro and cursed heavily.

"Dammit, what's wrong with him?"

Although he worried for Danny, Steve was going to drive home – to Danny's of course, if you can call his tiny apartment a home.

tertius

„What took you so long?!“

Steve had waited for more than two hours and he knew Danny could have made it within less than half of this time. Danny looked away, focussing something in the distance, way off Steve's direction.

“You shouldn't be here”, the blonde stated, hands in his pockets, and tried to pass the other man.

“Danny, we're partners. Why don't you share your sorrow or anger, whatever it is?”

“It's none of your business.”

That hurt.

Steve moved, so Danny couldn't pass. The blonde looked up at the other man, fiercely annoyed. Again, he didn't say a word. He swallowed his anger again. It felt like little arrows on his skin, so Steve thought, as he met eyes with his friend. This was not the Danny he knew. Never before had he avoided a discussion or any other argument Steve could think of. He could always put up some really good banters. Steve had to know the reason. Danny mustn't keep his problems away from him, especially that was what partners were for.

“What's the matter with you?”

Danny took a deep breath and sighed.

“She did it again”, he kind of muttered under his breath.

“Who did? Rachel?”

The sound of his ex-wife's name brought him back into reality. Danny's breath hitched. His eyes began burning. He felt impotent rage cradling him, his fists clenching hard, and he bit his tongue to not lose control in front of Steve. And Steve wasn't sure if he ever had known Danny in such a condition like now.

“Danny, you know I could help you feel better – just tell me what on earth is eating you!”

But Danny shoved him aside.

“Please go home. I can't deal with you at the moment. I can't bear you around. Go. Just go.”

The blonde rushed into his apartment, leaving Steve outside. Steve gulped in hurt. That was way more painful than before. He always thought they were so close to tell each other everything. Hell, he even let Danny know about how his mother has been all motherly and caring towards him and Mary. So why did Danny pushed him away like that? What made him dump Steve like some stranger in the middle of the drive?

quartus

What kind of noise did awaken him, Steve didn't really know. He felt a throbbing pain in his head. As he shifted from his sofa, some empty bottles of beer clinked. He ran his hand over his face. Now he remembered that he tried to drown his unexpected loneliness with some light alcohol. Usually it was Danny who drew to a close after a hard workday with him together, but not yesterday. Yesterday, Steve was all alone with his very own ghosts and nightmares.

Yet again, his mobile rang with the theme tone of Arielle the Mermaid. Steve was astonished. This was little Gracie's ringtone. Only a few weeks ago she got an own mobile phone from Step-Stan, for emergency causes only, as Danny stated firmly and told her not to misuse this new 'toy of the devil'. Nevertheless Steve and Grace exchanged numbers –for emergencies only, of course. So that was why Steve was afraid to hear the reason why the little girl would call him.

"Yeah Gracie, what's up, little darling?"

"Uncle Steve!"

Steve heard her sobbing within a pause, caused to heavy breathing.

"Come on, honey, tell me what's wrong? Shall I fetch you?"

"No, it's... I..."

"Is something with Danno?"

That was the very first idea his mind could come up with. It was not usual for Grace to call him just for nothing and he had never heard or seen her cry. That was something Danny was able to manage. The blonde former cop kept grief and sorrow from his little girl and it happened that he could always make her smile.

"Uncle Steve, don't be mad, I'm at your door. Your doorbell is broken. Please... please open!"

Steve, already on his way, frowned in sorrow, as he opened his door. He immediately bended down and hugged Grace firmly.

"Danno wasn't at home tonight... I'm sorry, Uncle Steve, I didn't know what to do. I was searching for him. I tried to call you and then I was already here", she cried.

"It's alright, Monkey, it's alright", he tried to calm her.

The Super-Seal was alarmed at once. Danny would never let Grace alone at home. Or at least he would call someone to look after her. That was so unusual that Steve wondered if he really knew his partner as well as he thought he did.

"Did you try to call him?"

"Yes. But it was only the mailbox answering."

"Okay. Come on in. You didn't had breakfast, did you? What about pancakes with blueberries?"

She gave him a shy nod. He wasn't very good with kids but Danny in his fathering way taught him well. He learned from his manners. And for the moment he was the only one Grace had.

"Okay, pancakes it is, then."

He shoved her into the kitchen. As he sat her on a bar stool and prepared some waffles, too, he mused over this situation. Yesterday Danny acted very awkward and rude, something which was nothing of his kind. The only hint Steve got was "Rachel".

"So, sweetie pie, is there something wrong with your Mum and Danno? Did they argue?"

"I don't know. Only thing is that Mum called Danno two days ago and got very mad at him, I didn't get what she was saying, but... she swore a lot and yelled at him. And then Danno came to pick me up and I stayed with him until today."

"It's gonna be alright, hun, don't worry. Probably it's some kind of adult thingy; they'll make it up for sure."

Although he was assuring Gracie and giving her comfort, he wasn't sure himself if that'd happen. He needed to call Daniel fucking Williams ASAP.

"Would you mind lending me your mobile? I'll try to ring Danno up."

"Sure."

She handed it over, wondering why he didn't call her daddy with his own. In fact, Steve assumed that Danny would pick up his phone easier when he saw his daughter calling, although her former trials were unsuccessful. Steve listened to the dial tone several times until he finally got to hear Danny's voice.

"Hey, monkey – I'm sorry, that's not the time now..."

"How dare you to left your daughter alone? Gone all AWOL the whole day and night?",

Steve heard him gasping slightly, also nearly heard him freeze, and his yet low voice got a tone quieter once more, like a whisper, as he retorted: "As much as I'd love argue about how advantageous your army-"

"NAVY!", Steve automatically snapped in, but Danny skipped that nonchalantly and continued:

"-slang is, I do not have time to talk to you."

Suddenly, his voice hitched, there were shouts and Danny cursed inwardly.

"Hey Danny, what's going on?"

"Hush!", was the only reply, there were creaking and scratching sounds and Steve concentrated all of his hearing for the fragmentary activity wherever Danny was. He was about to ask where this was going to lead them, when all of a sudden a loud gunshot burst his ears.

"Danno?!"

The line was still connected, but Danny didn't answer. In his place, he could hear an unknown man's gruff voice, still a bit quiet from the distance to the speaker, he guessed.

"What do we have here? Is that your daughter? That's a beautiful picture, really. Maybe I should talk to her... Perhaps she might want to help his daddy out of this shit?"

The voice got louder and Steves gaze wandered to Gracie, who still sat in the kitchen, eating some pancakes like a starving man.

"Hello darling, your daddy cannot talk right now. But he's gonna tell us where we can come for you, you just gonna wait."

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- ASAP für as soon as possible, also eigentlich jetzt sofort. Ausgesprochen ay-sap.
 - AWOL für absent without official leave, unentschuldigtes Fehlen oder wenn jemand oder etwas vermisst wird. Ausgesprochen a-wall.

quintus

If Grace had been on the phone, she would have gone crazy because of fear – that's what Steve felt completely certain about.

He didn't know what has happened, but Danny was in big trouble, that was for sure – and that was quite an understatement. First of all, he had to calm down his badly pushing and almost painful heartbeat when he wanted to handle this situation. Secondly he had to consider what to do now. Gracie was still in his kitchen. There was no way ever that Danny would hand out the information concerning her whereabouts. The bigger problem was that Steve had no idea where Danny himself was and what he had been up to – nothing came into Steve's mind which could have caused this much trouble. And there weren't any secret or special operations either, because otherwise he would have been informed, it was HIS team after all! And no one would mess with him or his team.

Steve approached the kitchen again, smiling when Grace lifted her head up, but not giving her the mobile back.

"Sorry, sweetie, I'd like to borrow it a bit longer, is that alright for you?"

"Yes, but why? And could you speak to Danno?"

"Yep. It is a bit complicated, sweetheart. Your Danno is working on a special case which I wasn't informed about and it seems that it will take him a little longer than he first thought. But he promised to call when he's finished, but that may be in the middle of the night. So he asked me to keep your mobile because he doesn't want to wake you up and let you stay in your beautiful dreams."

He bent down to her on eyesight and nudged her shoulder in order to make her believe him. Steve wasn't quite happy with lying to her, but it eventually was a white lie. Besides, she seemed understanding and relieved by now. The genuine reason for confiscating her cell phone was, of course, to prevent she'd speak to Danny's torturer.

"Although he won't make it in time, I am sure he'd do a good job. He's a great detective after all, right, Uncle Steve?"

"Why, yes! And even a really terrific member of Five-0. Umm, by the way, he told me to look after you. Would you mind staying with me this whole day?"

Considering the danger his partner's little girl was in, the only safe place he could figure was by his side. Thus he would be able to fully protect her.

"Phat!"

"Excuse me?" Steve looked startled at the beaming expression on her face.

"I meant I fancy hanging out with you, that's always great! So you gonna pick me up after school?"

School. Yeah, right. It was in the middle of the week. How could he forget! But the idea of entrusting her to the hands of the teachers only, deprived of any security, was not a likely one. Danny wouldn't be happy with it either. But Danny also left her at home all on her own, without telling his partner, left her in the tiny apartment without safety – didn't he think things through? And he calls Steve the 'shoot first and ask questions later' type of a guy! Grace could get harmed because of Danny's stupidity – at home, at school and at his shitty apartment a fortiori! ... Great, now he was letting Danny's kind of archaic language sneak into his very own thoughts. Steve quickly reconsidered the given options as he ran a hand through his hair. He couldn't, by no means, take the risk Grace being unwatched - especially not since he has heard

the gruff voice of the man, whom he suspected of kidnapping Danny. Suddenly, a brisk picture rushed through his head, a dull memory of a scene about how crazy Danny got when Gracie's life was once in danger. *I swear to god, I will kill you* – these were the exact words his partner spit out. When it comes to his daughter, Daniel Williams is willing to move heaven and earth to save her. Now it was Steve's turn to pull out all the stops.

"Yeah Grace, you know... Look. I'll get you excused from school because today you can come to work with me and see Aunt Kono and Uncle Chin. They'll show you how things get done at Five-0 headquarters. Sounds fun?"

Grace was surprised and not quite sure if that was right with mommy, but after she revealed her anxiety, Steve assured her that there wouldn't be any problem, it was like an internship for one day and she would be able and allowed to tell about it in class.

"Please go to the bath and brush your teeth. I have a spare in the centre drawer in the blue shelf. Now go – we're leaving in ten minutes."

He looked after her until she locked the door and hogged the bathroom. Then he called Chin-ho.

"Big problem, Chin. Danny got himself in a really deep mess. Under the known circumstances he's MIA – I want you to get information whether there was an open case just for him to solve. Let Kono help you by tracking his phone via GPS. I'll inform the governor. For more details I'll send you a mail in a few secs. Please work quick – me and Gracie arrive in about twenty minutes."

· **MIA** für *missing in action*, vermisst, Status unklar. KIA ist entsprechend *killed in action*

sextus

Painful moans and bashing sounds filled the darkened room, followed by a heavy and loud wheeze.

"You still remain silent? Out with it: Where's your little girl!?"

"Over my dead body!"

"Oh, don't worry; we can fix that soon..."

There was a huge hustle and bustle at Five-O headquarters when Steve arrived and brought Gracie along. Kono has tracked down Danny's mobile as requested from her boss. Chin was all busy with downloading the data of people who owned landed property in the found coordinates.

"Hey Grace! Would you like to see how we get a bad guy by drawing a photo fit picture?" asked Kono and smiled at the smart kid.

"Cute!" she responds with a broad simper.

Steve nodded at Kono's idea and waved them out. As the girls left the office, he sent an inquiring glare to Chin.

"Yeah, we found his cell phone. It hasn't moved since. But it is within the innermost of the jungle."

"There's no limit we won't exceed to help Danny!"

"We should get there soon. But ..."

Chin pointed at the direction where Kono and Grace exited the room.

"I know. We must protect her. With Danny being abducted by some weird guy it will be hard to stay within the confines of the law. But nevertheless we have to get him back, for Lords sake!" Steve stated firmly and looked troubled at the computer table.

"Sure it's a good thing we have all immunity and means."

Chin stared at Steve, frowning: "You didn't say what happened exactly."

The former lieutenant commander sighed. He admitted he didn't know what happened **exactly**, but he explained the events of the last days nonetheless, especially the perturbing call of this morning.

"And the Governor said that she didn't ask him out for a mission" Steve declared.

"This could only mean that he's investigating a case on his own."

Chin had a point. Yet Steve questioned Danny's reasons. Why on earth would he willingly put his daughter at such a threat?

Chin added: "According to his circumstances and his nature he maybe has to deal with some kind of family issues. Perhaps Rachel was threatened by someone and Danny wanted his daughter be safe at least?"

"Then there's the question who and why could have advantages by menacing a cop's wife?"

"Ex-wife, to be pretty precise. Well, I suggest we should try to check up on Rachel's new husband, what's his name again? Stan Edwards. Maybe his financial balances could help us to investigate how far Danny and Rachel are involved."

Their discussion was suddenly interrupted.

"Guys, Gracie and I are getting lunch for all of us – any special wishes?" Kono shouted

across the corridor.

"No thanks, just the usual!" Chin answered and greeted them with a slight wave.

"No, Gracie insists on vegetables. Or on any other healthy food."

"Yay, that would be pizza for all of us!" Steve joked.

"No, Uncle Steve! Despite what the government says about pizza, it is not very healthy!"

Grace stood there with her hand on her hips and gave him a deep look of reproach.

Steve was astonished and moved by her glare. Kono almost burst out laughing.

"Don't scold him too harsh, *aelan*, sometimes our boss needs a leading hand."

"And that's mostly Danno", added Chin, smiling gently. But at the same time he could have bitten his tongue as he saw her eyes becoming teary. Albeit Kono grabbed her shoulders and turned her around.

"Time to go! See you later!"

Both girls rushed out of the room.

"That was close. She almost cried. We shouldn't make her more upset than necessary", Chin suggested.

Steve nodded in affirmation: "When Danny will find out, he'll definitely kick my ass..."

"Definitely."